

Wordsworth anew. Richard Kramer, Distinguished Professor at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York pleased his audience with an accessible and learned foray into music with 'At the Edges of Romanticism: Haydn's Chaos and Beethoven's Lovers.'

The high quality of the plenary talks was echoed in the shorter presentations. The conference featured five or six concurrent panels, which meant that delegates were faced with difficult choices of which session to attend. It should be noted that the papers for the conference embraced an interdisciplinary approach to romantic studies with panels on French, German, religion, philosophy, art history and a particularly strong showing in the field of music. It would be difficult to summarize clear trends in the variety of subjects, ranging from Commerce, anatomy, melancholy and madness, libidinal subjects, subjectivities against themselves, romanticism's most wanted (criminals, forgers, fakes, frauds, imposters, and embezzlers), romanticism and Buddhism, travel literature, Zionism, portraiture, operatic subjects, and gothic subjectivities. The panels took a variety of formats: paper presentations, discussion of papers previously circulated, panels with a respondent, roundtable discussion, and a hands-on workshop designed to introduce individuals to database technology for research and for the classroom. While interest remains active in writers like Coleridge and Wordsworth, there was an equally strong representation of work on non-canonical figures, especially women writers, including what is likely an unprecedented eight papers on the writings and career of Mary Robinson. Anyone interested in the particulars of the conference programme can consult the conference Web site: http://depts.washington.edu/nassr01/program_files/program.htm A number of sessions interrogated the notion of a unitary subjectivity, so long associated with romantic writing. As the conference progressed, panelists drew on papers and plenaries already presented, a clear sign of the level of engagement and of the excellence of the papers.

While it seems unfair to single out any of the excellent sessions, one seminar might be described both for its subject and for its format. A special seminar, 'Editing Romanticism,' organized by Jeffrey Cox and Greg Kucich, offered an informal roundtable in which all present participated. It was clear from the enthusiasm of those in attendance (and had the doors to the building not been locked at 5 p.m. there would have been even more participants) that romanticism is being shaped for scholars and students by what Greg Kucich called a second wave of romantic editing. Topics considered included editing 'old' and 'new' romanticisms, print anthologies, digital romanticism and electronic texts, editing women's writing, economic imperatives and market and professional pressures, and how we learn and teach editorial skills. Of particular interest was how presses like Broadview, OUP, and Pickering and Chatto make their decisions about the publication of editions. There was also sustained discussion about how one acquires skills for editing and how graduate students might receive training in editing and in bibliography. Morris Eaves encouraged those present to seek out the assistance of the MLA Committee on Scholarly Editions, which serves as a clearinghouse for information about scholarly editing and editorial projects; offers advice and

consultation to editors on request; honors excellence in editing; and promotes dissemination of reliable texts for classroom use and among general readers. By the end of the session those present agreed that more could certainly be said and done about the subject. The organizers were encouraged to approach the NASSR board to develop a committee or other body that might ensure that assistance and information about editing romantic texts will be available to scholars working in the field of romanticism.

Conference conveners Gary Handwerk, Marshall Brown, and their team of organizers are to be congratulated for an excellent job of organizing a most successful event. It is to be hoped that NASSR conferences will continue to follow the example set by Seattle, so that it might fulfill its mandate to serve as a forum for the discussion of a wide variety of theoretical approaches to romantic works of all genres and disciplines.

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Review: A performance of *The Cenci*, by Percy Bysshe Shelley, The People's Theatre, Newcastle Upon Tyne, 22–26 May 2001

Percy Shelley's rarely performed play made a return to the Newcastle stage in May earlier this year after a seventy-six year absence. The People's Theatre, the same company that premiered *The Cenci* in Newcastle in 1935, delivered an impressive and pared-down production, under the direction of Shelley scholar Christopher Goulding. Judicious editing whittled down the duration of the performance to an audience-friendly two-and-a-half hours, and a cast of strong leading characters succeeded in animating Shelley's convoluted verse. A restless audience, broadly unfamiliar with the play, and in a stiflingly hot theatre, were not always patient with the poet's style despite the best efforts, and delightfully clear diction, of the cast. This minor problem was overcome by the strength of Paul O'Shea as an austere Count Cenci, who captivated the audience from the start. The play's opening vision of Cenci reclining on velvet cushions decadently sampling the choice fruits spread before him wonderfully anticipated his later menace. His baleful glittering eye hinted at the rage to come, which was forcefully staged in this production when he chastised a timid Lucretia at IV.i.

The intimacy of the near-full studio theatre heightened the sinister and oppressive air to fittingly Gothic proportions. The production was ever sensitive to the atmospherics of its stage space, and cultivated an unsettling proximity between audience and actors, particularly when O'Shea's mesmerising performance drew in the audience, as though to participate in Cenci's macabre banquet, at I.iii. The 'distorting mirror' was thus held up to the audience to intensify Cenci's dark horror. This was later turned on its head to spread, as a member of the audience audibly noted, 'a bit of comic relief,' when

Olimpio and Marzio weaved their way round the audience's seats in their farcical attempts to be assassins.

Felicity Clausen-Sternwald's impassioned speeches in act III projected Beatrice's emotional devastation successfully but this tenor diminished a more analytical and reasoning Beatrice that Shelley's text suggests. Because of this, Beatrice's speeches at the end of the play were unable to convey with sufficient impact the belief in her own rectitude, and the extent of her faulty logic, so crucial to *The Cenci's* moral vision. The heady emotional intensity of Beatrice was ideally balanced by the increasingly watchable Craig Conybeare as Orsino. His calculating and understated scheming further complicated the moral intrigue surrounding Cenci's murder, and made him seem wickedly rational when he took flight in 'vile disguise' at v.i. Beatrice's trial scene was slightly reworked into an interrogation orchestrated by Savella, in which his menacing authority matched the terror of the Cenci prisoners and propelled the play to its dark conclusion.

This People's Theatre production was a bold and successful staging of Shelley's drama and was sensitive to the limitations of Shelley's text. Compelling performances, particularly from Paul O'Shea and Craig Conybeare, and Felicity Clausen-Sternwald's fervent Beatrice (in what must be an exhausting role), were warmly appreciated by the audience but this modest cast declined anything further than the first curtain call. The People's Theatre brought Percy Shelley's play to life and communicated to the audience both the complexity and imperfect beauty of Shelley's dramatic art. Let us hope that Newcastle audiences will not have to wait another seventy-six years for this play to return to the stage.

The script used for this production, prepared by Christopher Goulding, can be found at

<http://www.sandmartyn.freemove.co.uk/cenci/cencit2001.html>

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